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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [KG](#)
SUBJECT: NEW KYRGYZ OPPOSITION ASKS FOR HELP

REF: A. BISHKEK 109
[1](#)B. BISHKEK 97
[1](#)C. BISHKEK 96
[1](#)D. BISHKEK 80
[1](#)E. BISHKEK 44

Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This cable contains an action request at paragraph 20.

Summary

[1](#)2. (S) Former Presidential Chief of Staff Sadyrkulov told the Ambassador that his new "opposition" was developing a plan to oust President Bakiyev. Sadyrkulov outlined a scenario that involved splitting the Ak Jol party, encouraging civil disobedience at the district level, getting the security services to disobey the President's orders, and enlisting the support of prominent businessmen. Sadyrkulov claimed that Bakiyev reached a decision to close Manas Air Base in December after discussion with the Russians over the \$2.5 billion assistance package. Sadyrkulov said he refused the offer to be foreign minister because he wanted no part of the Base closure. He advised not to negotiate over Manas with the Bakiyev government, but wait until his new government was in place. He also asked for financial assistance from the USG to support his efforts. End Summary.

Splitting with Bakiyev

[1](#)3. (C) The Ambassador met with former Presidential Chief of Staff Medet Sadyrkulov February 6 at the Embassy at Sadyrkulov's request. From April 2007 until his resignation January 8 (Ref E), Sadyrkulov served as Bakiyev's behind-the-scenes orchestrator of political events. Sadyrkulov subsequently turned down an offer to become foreign minister.

[1](#)4. (C) Sadyrkulov said that he finally broke with the President because Bakiyev had chosen to place the interests of his family -- his brothers and sons -- above the interests of the country. Sadyrkulov recounted a stressful past year,

which began December 31, 2007 with Bakiyev's brother Janysh sending him a package that contained a severed finger and two ears. The package scared his wife and young daughter, and Sadyrkulov said he realized that Janysh was a "thug." Sadyrkulov said he tried to "wean" Bakiyev from his brothers and avaricious son Maxim, but despite assurances that he cared about the country, Bakiyev continued to favor family interests.

¶15. (C) Late in the year, Sadyrkulov commissioned a public opinion poll, which showed Bakiyev increasingly unpopular. According to Sadyrkulov, Bakiyev received his lowest rating in his home oblast of Jalalabad. Bakiyev was also unpopular in Chui Oblast, in Bishkek, and among business elites. He shared the poll results with Bakiyev, but to no effect. On December 30, Sadyrkulov made one last effort. During a long night of vodka drinking and manQtears, Sadyrkulov tried to convince Bakiyev that his family's racketeering -- the bribes, the threats, the taking over of profitable businesses -- created an untenable situation and would turn the country against him. Unable to turn Bakiyev from his family, Sadyrkulov then resigned.

¶16. (C) Sadyrkulov told the Ambassador, "As Bakiyev has been accumulating money, I have been accumulating people." And following his resignation, a number of them also resigned from government, including Deputy Prime Minister Elmira Ibrahimova and Presidential Economic Policy Advisor Azamat Dikembayev (Refs D and E).

Plans to Oust Bakiyev

¶17. (C) Expanding on the plan for a "new opposition" described by Ibrahimova earlier this week (Ref A), Sadyrkulov outlined his scenario to bring down Bakiyev. He said that he and Ibrahimova were already talking to members of the pro-presidential Ak Jol party in an effort to cause a split in the party. (Note: Sadyrkulov was the force behind creating Ak Jol in September 2007. End note.) They will then put allegations of Bakiyev and family's wrongdoing and criminal connections before the party, shaming Bakiyev. Sadyrkulov said his preference is to handle this quietly within the party, with Bakiyev resigning. If this approach does not work, Sadyrkulov said that the next step would be for action at the oblast and rayon level, where there would be acts of civil disobedience and refusal to follow the orders of the central government.

¶18. (C) Asked why Bakiyev would resign when he and Janysh control the levers of power in the military and security services, Sadyrkulov said that he was "working with the organs of power." He said that Bakiyev had replaced top police officials with people loyal to the Bakiyev family, but this tactic would backfire, as people in Bishkek hated having the police "in the hands of southerners."

¶19. (C) Sadyrkulov said that he was also seeking the support of prominent businessmen. He claimed that the Union of Kyrgyz Businessmen would be meeting later in February, at which time the Union will announce its support for the opposition.

¶110. (C) Sadyrkulov said that after Bakiyev is ousted, Ibrahimova would be a "good candidate" to be the new president. Her father, who was Prime Minister during the Soviet era, was from Tokmok (in the north), but had been a popular governor in the South. Further, he had been assassinated, making him a martyr. Ibrahimova would be "unifying."

Bakiyev Planning for Early Elections

¶111. (C) Sadyrkulov claimed that Bakiyev was aware of his plans and was taking steps to counter. First, Bakiyev signed the financial deal with Russia, which gives him money to run his campaign. Second, Bakiyev has asked Russia for help by

sending a contingent from the FSB, because he expects there to be opposition to his decision to close Manas. Third, Bakiyev created the Secretariat within the Presidency (Ref E) to run his re-election campaign, for early presidential elections in August 2009. Sadyrkulov claimed that one of the experts brought in to the Secretariat, Vladimir Nikitin from Ukraine, had shown him a copy of a contract with Maxim Bakiyev, under which he would direct a PR campaign to solidify the hold of the Bakiyev family on the Kyrgyz state.

Help Needed

¶12. (C) Sadyrkulov said that the opposition's biggest obstacle was lack of access to the media, but he has a plan to rectify the situation. He said he had approached the NBT television station, and convinced it to carry Azattyk programming (RFE/RL's Kyrgyz language service). "I'll use this channel," he said. Sadyrkulov also claimed to have approached the owner of AKIpress, an internet news service. He said that AKIpress was trying to move its website to Canada, and after that would cooperate with Sadyrkulov.

¶13. (S) Sadyrkulov said that in addition to television and internet access, his new opposition needed a newspaper. He asked the Ambassador for financial assistance to operate a newspaper and to run a media campaign.

Hold Tight on Manas

¶14. (C) Sadyrkulov said that Bakiyev had made his decision to close Manas Air Base during the December 19 informal summit of CIS leaders at Borovoye, Kazakhstan. Bakiyev agreed to close Manas in exchange for Russia's promise of financial assistance. Sadyrkulov said he refused the offer to be foreign minister because he wanted no part of the Base closure.

¶15. (S) Sadyrkulov said that he thought the Embassy was taking the right stance on Bakiyev's announcement that he was closing Manas Air Base (by issuing a statement that said we had not received notice of the closure and our programs will continue). Pointing to the Kyrgyz Parliament's decision to delay consideration of the law closing the Base, Sadyrkulov said that the Kyrgyz government was trying to "buy time" for further discussions. Sadyrkulov said that if the USG does get official notice to close the Base, the USG should not negotiate with Bakiyev, but should "remain aloof." Sadyrkulov said he could get a new government in place "within two months" that would support keeping the Base. When the Ambassador asked why the U.S. would want a base in a country with such instability, Sadyrkulov assured her that he would establish stability within two months.

Comment

¶16. (S) Is Sadyrkulov sincere, or is this a provocation? He wanted to meet at the Embassy, and he suggested that Ibraimova meet the Ambassador at the Embassy next Monday and another acolyte Tuesday. He himself would come later further to discuss their scenario to oust Bakiyev. The fact of such meetings would undoubtedly become known by the government services.

¶17. (S) Sadyrkulov's scenario does not hold together, nor does he present a convincing argument that Bakiyev would voluntarily leave. He seems to envision a repetition of March 2005, when Askar Akayev quietly left the country rather than face down unrest. Bakiyev and other officials have said they will not tolerate unrest and will not shy away from using force.

¶18. (C) Sadyrkulov likes to operate behind the scenes, and he does have many people loyal to him. But many times in the past, he has promised more than he can deliver.

¶19. (S) Finally, regardless of Sadyrkulov's ability to

manipulate the domestic situation to bring down Bakiyev, unless he also has support from Moscow, no successor government will be stable, and no revived Manas Base agreement will be tenable in the long run. In fact, Ambassador got the impression that Sadyrkulov was sad that he could not benefit from Moscow's support.

Action Request

¶20. (S) Post requests that Department provide guidance on further contacts with Sadyrkulov and his "opposition." It seems clear to us that if the Ambassador accedes to meetings with his hand-picked acolytes on dates of his choosing (Ibraimova on Monday, a think tanker on Tuesday) Sadyrkulov will interpret this as USG acquiescence in helping him oust Bakiyev. As reported, he will then expect financial help to do so. On the other hand, it is important to keep a channel open to the opposition. It may therefore be more expedient for lower-level officers to meet with opposition representatives in the future. In any case, Post will follow Department guidance on this.

GFOELLER